

DRESSING



People with dementia need more time to dress. It may be hard for them to choose their clothes. They might wear the wrong clothing for the season. They also might wear colors that don't go together or forget to put on a piece of clothing. Allow the person to dress on his or her own for as long as possible.

CAUSES:

- Depression may cause them to lack energy or need for personal hygiene.
- Physical illness, causing a loss of interest in personal hygiene.
- Impaired vision.
- Instructions were not clearly given.
- No longer able to make decisions.
- Fear and anxiety.
- Feeling of embarrassment or rushed.
- Does not understand how to get dressed.
- The task is too complicated.
- Poor lighting.
- Too many distractions such as noise, people or clutter.
- Lack of privacy.
- Room temperature.
- Changes in motor skills.
- Memory loss.
- A side effect of medication.

TIPS FOR HELPING A PERSON WITH DEMENTIA:

Helping someone with dementia choose what to wear is an important role. You will be helping them to retain some choice and to express their own identity and personal style. You will also be helping to make sure that they are clean, warm and comfortable.

- Give the person choice.
 - Ask the person what they would like to put on, limit the choices.
- Encourage independence.
 - Lay out clothes on a non-patterned background.
 - Lay out clothes in the order the person should put them on, such as underwear first, then pants, then a shirt, and then a sweater.
 - Make sure that the items are not inside out and that buttons, zips, and fasteners are all undone.
- Give instructions in very small steps.
- It may help to use gestures to demonstrate these instructions.
- Put labels on drawers or store whole outfits together.
- Put away some clothes in another room to reduce the number of choices. Keep only one or two outfits in the closet or dresser.
- Keep the closet locked if needed.

- Help the person stay comfortable.
 - Make sure the room is warm enough to get dressed in.
 - Ensure that the lighting is suitable.
 - Provide a suitable chair with arms if the person has poor balance.
 - Think about privacy – make sure that blinds or curtains are closed.
 - Ask the person if they would like to go to the bathroom before getting dressed.
 - Try to keep to the person’s preferred routine.
 - It can be useful if the person wears several thin layers of clothing, so they can remove a layer if it gets too warm.
 - Buy loose-fitting, comfortable clothing, such as sports bras, cotton socks, and underwear, and sweatpants and shorts with elastic waistbands.
 - Use velcro or large zippers for clothing instead of shoelaces, buttons, or buckles.
 - If the person can no longer tell you if they are too hot or cold, keep an eye out for signs of discomfort.
- Changes clothes regularly.
- Make dressing a positive experience.
 - If mistakes are made – for example, by putting something on the wrong way round – be tactful, or find a way for you both to laugh about it.
- Go clothes shopping together.
- Buy three or four sets of the same clothes if the person wants to wear the same clothing every day.
- Accept any unusual clothing choices.
- Allow enough time.
- Use hand over hand technique (Teepa Snow) on their dominant side.
- Be patient, pause for nine seconds for a response.
- Reward with foods or treats.

CAREGIVER’S BEHAVIOR:

- Stay calm.
- Slow down activity if the person is getting upset.
- Don’t hurry or pressure the person.
- Do things in steps.
- Use reassurance.
- Step away from the situation and come back to it in a couple of minutes.

“Bathing, Dressing, and Grooming: Alzheimer’s Caregiving Tips.” National Institute on Aging, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 18 May 2017, www.nia.nih.gov/health/bathing-dressing-and-grooming-alzheimers-caregiving-tips.

Robinson, Anne, et al. Understanding Difficult Behaviors: Some Practical Suggestions for Coping with Alzheimers Disease and Related Illness. Eastern Michigan University, 1994.